

# **THE FREEDOM STORY**

**or**

# **HOW TO BECOME A "GO SEE"**

Franklin S. Clark  
250 Mulberry Street  
New York, N. Y.

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HOUSE FOR THE BLIND**

Part 1 - "Walk Confidently With

Sensi-Quik"

Page 1

Part 2 - "Travel Tips"

Page 4

## WALK CONFIDENTLY WITH SENSI-QUIK

Sensi-Quik is the cane with the tip that can work wonders for blind travelers. It's different in appearance, different in performance. The stock is of bamboo and the curved handle of beautifully finished French chestnut. It's a cane you can "wear" and be proud of. And you can count on it to get you there, too - rain or shine.

The special features of Sensi-Quik were developed the hard way through use and experience. It is not a "miracle" cane, but it is a practical tool that can put quickness into the steps of many blind persons and provide increased safety for countless others.

I make these statements on the basis of my own experience. I was fifty-six years of age when, seven years ago, I lost my sight in an accident. Thanks to a training course that I took, I learned in the first year of my blindness the cane "know-how" that Sensi-Quik implements.

I said it wasn't a miracle cane. It isn't. There's nothing tricky about it. But here's what it can do for you if you are a sightless traveler in reasonably good physical shape:

1. Sensi-Quik makes it possible for you to walk along just about as fast as anyone on the average sidewalk.
2. It can provide safer travel for almost any blind person.
3. It can free you from the restrictions of those conditions of weather and terrain that traditionally restrict blind travelers.

Sensi-Quik can bring you all this and more too, because it is a better tool. The basic travel technique that it implements is the one that the Army developed for the blinded GI's at the Valley Forge General Hospital at Phoenixville, Pa., sometimes referred to as "the long-cane technique". In common speech among the blind, one says to another, "Do you swing your cane or do you tap it?" The technique that Sensi-Quik puts "oomph" into is the so-called "swing" method of walking with a cane, swinging it in front of you to protect you against obstacles that you might otherwise bump into.

This, however, is a crude way of describing the technique Sensi-Quik serves. "Swing" is not, in fact, quite the word to apply to the style of touch-travel that Sensi-Quik has been developed for. "Stroke" not "swing" is the word that goes with Sensi-Quik. Instead of "tap, tap" and "creep, creep" with Sensi-Quik in your hand you step-a-long smartly and safely.

Sensi-Quik's tip is made of tungsten carbide. A disc of this diamond-hard material one-eighth inch thick with a half-inch diameter is set into the end of a steel ferrule. It glides, does not catch or drag even on the grittiest, roughest sidewalk surfaces; provides quick, accurate "reports". An incidental advantage is the tip's increased life. My experience indicates that this carbide tip will outlast a steel tip by at least twelve times, perhaps longer.

Between each of the natural joints of the bamboo are two-inch wide double-thick Scotch Light nighttime reflection bands. These bands are impregnated with small particles of glass, and in the direct glare of an automobile headlight, they are radiant. The bottom band is bright red and the others are white. If you need help at intersections or elsewhere these white-red Scotch Light bands identify you as a sightless traveler. If it is

late at night and you are at an intersection where there are no pedestrians, chances are if you will just hold out Sensi-Quik to catch the beams from the headlights of passing cars on the Scotch Light bands, a motorist will stop to help you. Likewise, the Scotch Light bands will make it easy for motorists to see you when walking along the edge of a motor highway at night.

The cane's curved handle aids in accurate tip placement. When a free hand is needed, slide the end of the handle into your lapel pocket or tuck it under your other arm. The four-inch gum rubber finger grip, at the point where the bamboo joins the wood, facilitates accurate control of its light-weight tip. The grip is neatly finished off with brass ferrules.

The weight of Sensi-Quik varies slightly according to cane length. My own Sensi-Quik, which is 48 inches long, weighs 7 ounces. This, in my experience, is about the right cane length for a person of my traveling ability and height. I am five feet eleven inches tall. A cane 40 inches long, which might be about right for a traveler five feet three inches in height weighs approximately 6 1/2 ounces. Sensi-Quik is lighter than most metal canes of comparable strength and sturdiness. It is a good "reporter", but not clangy or noisy. Not only is Sensi-Quik light in total weight, but its tip is light. The handle and upper section of the cane account for most of its weight.

Sensi-Quik's ample half-inch diameter tip rides over cracks and unevenesses of the roughest cement. The upper edge of the tip ferrule is tapered flush to the cane diameter so there's no bumping action or catching on the edge of the treads in ascending stairways. It doesn't catch in gratings as oversize cane tips do.

The Sensi-Quik trademark is done in ink print overlaid with Braille dots so that if you encounter sighted folk who are curious about how it is possible to read by dot, or who wonder what Braille is like, you have a handy sample to show them.

There are many reasons why you will like Sensi-Quik. First, you will like the pleasant feel of it. On a hot day, it is not uncomfortably hot, nor is it uncomfortably cold on a cold day. It's a pleasure, too, to run your fingers over the smoothness of its "furniture-finished" French chestnut handle and the curiously shaped joints of the bamboo stock.

Sensi-Quik gives better performance. It is also a smart looking cane. It does not detract from your sartorial get-up, but actually adds a certain "something". Ask any of your sighted friends how they like the looks of it, and they'll tell you without any "ifs", "ands" or "buts" that it's a nice-looking stick.

### TRAVEL TIPS

Special features of Sensi-Quik's design have been worked out in relation to the long-cane technique. In the long-cane method of touch travel, as it was originally developed at Valley Forge General Hospital at Phoenixville, Pa., the cane's tip is stroked back and forth across the line of travel and in rhythm with the traveler's steps in a "staggered" time pattern. It goes back and forth, also forward. It walks ahead, as it were, and thus protects, and in some degree, leads the traveler. While the cane, for this technique, is a few inches longer than an ordinary walking stick, the protection it affords is not so much dependent upon its extra inches of length as upon perfect timing and accurate tip placement.

Grasp the cane as you would a pencil or blackboard pointer on the stock just below its crook. The forefinger should point down the cane's barrel, so the cane's tip becomes, in effect, an elongation of the pointing index finger. The index finger and thumb act as a clamp. The cane is pressed into this "clamp" with the tips of the other fingers.

Sensi-Quik has a four-inch gum rubber finger grip on the cane's stock just below its curved handle. This makes for sure finger control. At Valley Forge it was the practice to hold the cane with the crook pointing away from the traveler. Sensi-Quik's crook may be held either way; away from or toward the traveler. The crook is never gripped in the fist, but helps to control tip action as the heel of the thumb comes to bear either on the inside or outside of the cane's shoulder.

As you start walking with Sensi-Quik, the cane's tip is pointed so that it comes to rest on the ground ahead of and a little to the left of the left foot. When you step out with your left foot, bring the cane's tip quickly across to a corresponding position ahead of and to the right of the right foot. This cross stroke, repeated in rhythm with the steps, is the basic principle of the long-cane technique. The routine goes like this; step left, stroke right, - step right, stroke left. As a result of this staggered timing, the cane's tip arrives in the area where a foot is coming at the time of the "step-off". Thus, if we call the cane's tip a front foot, it will always be two paces ahead of the "back" foot, as it starts its forward motion.

The cane serves as a bumper to fend off hazards. The cane "warns". If there is an obstruction, say a lamp post, a hydrant or steps jutting out across the sidewalk, the cane tip reports it. The traveler

changes his course, veering or perhaps taking a quick scissors step to right or left or stopping dead in his tracks. Similarly, if the cane tip touches nothing, the traveler is warned that he is too close to the curb or, perhaps, to cellar steps. Timing must be perfect. Pressure must be exerted by the forefinger on the cane's barrel to prevent the tip from bobbing up and down too much. Don't role your wrist. The tip should move back and forth in a straight line and close to the ground or sidewalk. If it begins bobbing up or down unduly, the cane may miss low obstructions, such as low steps that stick out across the sidewalk, and the traveler may stumble.

As the traveler's coordination improves, he gets better and better at avoiding the hazards the cane reports. Furthermore, as he gains confidence, he also gains an ability to keep his direction and with practice depends less and less on the cane's bumper action.

The common notion that the slower a cane traveler goes, the safer he is doesn't necessarily hold true. Long, even strides and a fair speed, with the weight thrown slightly forward, can aid the traveler in holding a straight course. This applies especially when the sidewalk is uneven with no guiding slant up or down. However, in strange territory, the traveler should not be going too fast or he may get into trouble, just as the speeding motorist does who "saw it too late". In strange territory, he should be able to stop in his tracks if the cane reports danger.

Both sides of the sidewalk in a business area are strewn with hazards. The cane, properly stroked, protects the traveler against these hazards. Nevertheless, if he holds a straight course and keeps well away from obstacles, he will make a better impression on other pedestrians, who will only be alarmed if they see

him hitting things with his cane. Timing is the thing that counts in this technique. Sensi-Quik's lightness, it's bounce and life, and most of all, the glide action of its special tip, aid in maintaining perfect timing.

The stroking rhythm is related to the traveler's forward motion. Few totally blind travelers are able to hold a perfectly straight forward course. This isn't necessary. However, when the factor of motion in a forward direction becomes erratic, hazards can "get through" the traveler's defense. If the traveler wobbles all over the place and gyrates from side to side, his foot can unexpectedly step off the curb ahead of the cane or he can bump his head into an awning post. Don't worry about veering a little this way or that, but don't wobble, don't gyrate.

The cane tip operates at sidewalk level and does not protect the traveler against the "low bridge" type of obstacle or "overhangs". A truck backed across the sidewalk is the commonest "low bridge" hazard in New York. I have bumped into a few of these and have picked up a BAND-AID or two from assorted types of "overhangs". I can truthfully report, however, to having got just as many bumps from guiding with sighted passers-by and even my own friends. Sighted folk don't always remember that two stick out farther than one. Then, when there are two of you, maybe you get to talking. If there is a perfectly safe way for a blind person to travel, or a sighted person either, I have yet to hear of it.

The basic factor in any method of touch travel is nothing more nor less than the art of keeping a safe course from one tactile cue to another. Thus, a blind person in his own home arises from a chair in its accustomed place, walks across the room, perhaps brushes another chair or table in passing and turns off the radio. Some blind persons depend mainly on an

object-to-object technique in outdoor travel. They may get their direction from the mere act of stepping down a familiar step. They can then walk confidently to the end of the block, touching only here and there some familiar landmark with their cane or, perhaps, picking up the cues they need from what they hear, and from the feel of the sidewalk under their feet without using their cane at all.

When conditions are favorable, the long-cane traveler can also make use of such abilities if he has them or can develop them. Regardless of the traveler's natural abilities, however, this long-cane technique affords him protection even under unfavorable conditions. If rain or wind dim out "sound cues", if snow on the sidewalk muffles "touch cues", he can still get there with his long cane.

In a residential area where there is a grass strip on either side of the sidewalk, and no obstacle on the sidewalk itself, there will not be the same need for concentration in holding direction. Under such conditions, the traveler can easily hold a course at the edge of the sidewalk by tapping the cane alternately on the sidewalk and the grass strip. Similarly, alternately touching the tip on the dirt shoulder and pavement will keep the traveler safely at the edge or side of a highway where there is no sidewalk.

Many technically blind persons, of course, have some slight degree of sight that helps them under favorable light conditions. Even though the traveler may have some slight degree of sight, ceaselessly stroking the cane back and forth in front of him may save him from stumbling over a motor scooter that some heedless child left out, and he will be protected against that open cellar way, if he brings the cane tip down at every step.

No cane or method of using a cane provides complete protection in itself. Something must be left to the traveler's judgment. According to conditions, and the traveler's own abilities, he can go slower or faster or even modify his technique.

The traveler must make his own decisions relating to "risk" factors. In familiar territories he can modify his technique according to his knowledge of conditions. In areas where there are no step-downs, his cane strokes will protect him from obstacles even though he does not touch the sidewalk with his tip. This does not protect him, however, if there is a subway entrance which comes out across the sidewalk. If he is not touching his cane tip at each step he is liable to fall into it. The same would apply if there are cellar stairs that he didn't know about.

When the sidewalks are crowded with other pedestrians, the traveler should shorten his stride and grasp the cane a few inches lower down. Experience will teach him how far out to the side to stroke the cane. If he strokes too far out, other people may have difficulty getting by him. Yet, if he does not stroke out widely enough, the cane will fail to adequately protect him. His aim should be to keep to the right-hand side of the sidewalk, but a course somewhat near the middle is better than traveling too far out to the side in business areas.

A brushing technique can be substituted under some conditions in place of the side-to-side stroking of the cane. This is an appropriate variation where hazards of "step-downs" or "step-offs" may be lurking about. Sensi-Quik's diamond hard, easy gliding tip is well suited to this technique. I use this brushing technique in subway stations where a false step off the edge of the platform would result in a fall onto the tracks. The cane is synchronized with the steps in the same staggered

pattern, but the tip is kept in contact with the surface being explored. If the traveler takes a wide sweep, and takes care to keep his timing correct, this method makes "sure", doubly sure, where there are step-offs.

In such areas where there are dangerous step-offs or step-downs, it is best to rely on volunteer guides as much as possible. In general, I, personally, would rather have help than not in a subway station. It's so difficult to be sure just where the steps may be, and it's slow, nervous work getting about in such a hazardous area. When I get off a subway train late at night and there are fellow passengers, I sing out, "Is anyone going up to the street?" If no one else is getting off, I get someone to tell me whether to go to the right or left to get to the stairs as I leave the train.

The best way to thread through a crowd with the aid of a sighted guide is to put your right hand on his or her left shoulder so you can either track behind or edge through narrow spaces sideways, or come alongside if conditions permit.

Stairs are, of course, easy to negotiate with any type of cane. Whether going up or down, brush the cane along the edge of the first step to determine which way it runs, how high it is and how wide. Then if going up, simply hold the cane out in front of you so the tip will bump on the edge of each step ahead, and when it bumps no more, you know you are at the top. Similarly, going down, get your direction, the height and width of the steps by brushing the first one. Then hold the cane so the tip will be a step ahead. When it bumps on the landing you will know you're at the bottom.

This brushing technique is very handy in deserted subway stations. However, it should never be used anywhere in crowded areas, as holding the cane out in this way, with its tip resting on a sidewalk or platform,

constitutes a tripping hazard for others. Never, never stand with the cane pointing out where people are passing.

The natural first reaction of a sighted person is that, if he were blind, under no circumstances in this day of the automobile would he undertake to cross a street without assistance. Possibly, if this sighted generalizer himself had to deal with this common problem of sightless travelers, he might, under some conditions, alter this viewpoint. Crossing intersections unassisted is one of the calculated risks concerning which every blind person must make his own decisions.

To begin with, the traveler must consider his own abilities. Is his coordination as good as the average? Does he have a fair sense of direction and is he quick on his feet? Is his hearing good? Even a sharp ear may not hear the engine of a recent model high-powered car.

The traveler must consider weather conditions: wind and snow and rain. Snow drowns out the sounds of a moving tire. But rain, which muffles most sound cues magnifies this sound.

This is the way you cross intersections without help, if it seems necessary and advisable to do so. First, line yourself up with the edge of the curb, brushing your cane along its edge, because you must rely on that to give you your direction. Then, if it is a quiet intersection listen intently for the sound of squeaking tires. If there is no sound of moving tires - no car coming from either direction - across you go! However, before you start walking, make a "stance"; in other words, step one foot down from the curb and pause momentarily with out-stretched cane. This stance conforms to the White Cane Laws, which all States now have. Likewise, it serves as an extra precaution, warning the motorist

who might have been out of earshot, that you are about to cross. Point the cane straight out as you make the stance but, as you start walking, lower the tip continuing to hold the cane out at arm's length but at right angles with the pavement. When you arrive at the other side the tip bumps on the curb, tells you you are across and how high to step up.

At a busy intersection, instead of getting his cue from silence, the traveler gets a reverse kind of signal. Sound gives him his cue rather than silence. He listens for the traffic to stop moving in one direction and to start moving in the other direction. After the traffic starts to move on the avenue he then knows it is not moving on the cross street and vice versa. He makes his stance before starting, of course, just as at a quiet intersection. At the busy intersection, the outstretched cane warns the motorist about to make a turn of the traveler's intent to cross. If the motorist sees too late to stop, he hits the cane rather than the traveler.

On the routes I am traveling at the present time, I often find it convenient to cross side streets unassisted. And, late at night after the traffic has thinned out and there are few pedestrians, I often cross main highways by myself making use of the cue of stillness. As has been said, each sightless traveler must decide for himself under what conditions he wishes to cross alone. Usually, where traffic is heavy, there are also plenty of pedestrians who will be willing to lend him a hand. Getting across intersections is not often a serious problem for blind persons.

A blind person may get a few more scratches and bruises going about his work than others do. But what other people think can hurt more. Shyness and fear generated by fears of others is the thing that keeps most blind persons shut in. When I got back from the training

station with my new cane, my two year old daughter used to ask me to let her have it, and after she had got it away from me would shut her eyes and go poking around with it, pretending she was blind. "What would it be like if I were blind?", was running through her little head. It is not only children who react in this way to blindness. The common impulse to wonder "just what it would be like if I were like that" is the psychological climate that all must live in who have conspicuous disabilities. Cripples must live in it. Amputees must live in it. But, most of all, blind persons must live in it.

Everyone has his or her idea as to how they would manage - or not manage at all - if they were blind. Consciously or unconsciously sighted folk put themselves, presumptuously, so it often seems to the blind person, in his place. It is the rigors of this psychological climate that most commonly keeps blind persons at home. People have all sorts of odd ideas about what it is like to be blind and, all too often, the mere thought of being blind themselves frightens them - and fear is contagious.

"Blind" is an old, old word. Historically, "blind" means helplessness, beggary. This brief instance in which we have lived with machines is nothing compared to the span of time that has given the word its most generally accepted meanings. This typewriter of mine takes no account of the established meaning of the word, nor does a transportation system that can carry a blind man to work as fast as a sighted one. Machines don't go by words. A typewriter doesn't ask if the man who runs it is blind nor does an automatic lathe or drill press. But all men do. They can't accept the word "blind" rationally.

All too often, when a blind person tries to do for himself, he arouses anxiety rather than winning admiration. He is at a disadvantage in the impression that he

creates on others in many common acts. He fumbles a little finding the knob of a door. The sighted onlooker nervously reaches ahead of him, gets hold of the knob before he can, pulls the door edge into his face and, as he finally gets himself unsnarled and inside, follows up to give him more guidance because, in the excitement, he lost his direction cue on entering and needs it.

Theoretically a sighted person admires the blind person who has the courage to travel independently. But all too often, when they see a blind person going it alone, in their hearts they would feel easier if two good eyes were guiding the sightless one. If he veers from a straight course, they want to help. We all have an urge to help our brothers when they are in trouble, but to understand another's problems is not easy, especially if the problem is a desire for independence. Every man must fight for his own independence. Be courteous but stick to your guns. Don't let other people's notions get you mixed up or scare you. Don't try to race with a sighted person; you can't go quite as fast. But you can travel competently and safely in your own way.

It takes the most courage at the outset to be firm with those who are nearest and dearest to the sightless one, who decides to be independent travelwise. Once he has made a beginning, the rest is easier. As he gets over the awkward stage, walks with increased confidence in his step, and in the very expression of his face and tone of voice, the people the traveler knows and encounters will begin to relax also.

This little booklet is not intended as a manual of instruction. But it does indicate the basic features of skill with the long-cane technique as it can be carried out with Sensi-Quik. The rest can come with practice.

Like many another to whom blindness had come in a world I thought I saw by eye entirely, I soon discovered that I could still see with the help of my other senses and of my mind. The eye is a handy thing, a telegrapher of light rays that increase the range of sight. Touch has to help it though; the brain has to help it. Even without the eyes we can still see. Every blind person, in some measure, knows this.

"Going" is a powerful help to "seeing" for a blind man. You see people, the people you want to see and need to see. You go and you do. What is more, with your going you help to make it easier for other sightless travelers. You join the fraternity of the "Go Sees".

I want everyone who lays a finger to Sensi-Quik to discover in it, as I have, a tool that can take him to wherever he wants to go. Therefore, I and others who have helped to develop Sensi-Quik have joined forces in the "Go Sees".

The "Go Sees" are not a formally organized body as yet. Perhaps some day, however, they will be. Some of us are sightless, some of us are sighted. The sighted ones among us have been of most help in bringing Sensi-Quik into being.

Let me say again, this does not pretend to be a manual of instruction. I have simply set down what seems to me the basic factors in the long-cane technique. I have not, in all cases, used just the same language that other exponents of the long-cane technique might employ. For example, I know there are some who call it a tapping technique. I don't like to call it that because so many travelers who tap with their canes rely chiefly on the echoes from their cane taps for guidance. For me,

what the cane touches and what I feel that it touches with my fingers is far more dependable than what I may learn from the sound of the cane's tap. I know the cane's tip can often provide a useful sound cue also. If my own hearing were more acute perhaps I would be more inclined to use the word "tapping".

In my experience, the cane tip has to be accurately controlled. Swinging the cane seems too leisurely and haphazard to me. I like the word stroke better than swing. Getting the cane tip there at the right time and in the right place is much more like stroking a golf ball than just letting something swing.

It is far too easy to think of blindness as a handicap that affects all alike. Degree of blindness is perhaps the commonest variant as it affects travel ability. Alertness, the keenness of the remaining senses and dozens of individual characteristics of temperament and ability enter into it.

I am not a cane instructor, but I am passing on what I have learned by experience. While this is no manual of instruction, it contains a great deal of information which I think ought to prove helpful to others, who would like to avail themselves of this really revolutionary and easily learnable touch travel technique that came out of World War II. Sensi-Quik should prove helpful, too.

The price of Sensi-Quik is five dollars which includes postage to anywhere in the United States and Canada. If five dollars is more money than you can lay your hands on, and if your local and state service organization cannot bear the costs, write me about it.

In ordering, state your height. Exponents of the long-cane technique vary somewhat in their ideas about appropriate cane length. I've found that for my height of five feet eleven inches, with a cane 48 inches long, I can make better speed and have fewer mishaps than with a cane of shorter length and that inches added to this norm for a person of my height seems to make the cane unnecessarily cumbersome.

Sensi-Quik comes in three standard lengths. The 48 inch cane is recommended for a person five feet nine inches to six feet tall; a 44 inch cane for those five feet five inches to five feet eight; a 40 inch cane for persons five feet one inch to five feet four. Cane lengths can be varied approximately inch for inch with a traveler's height.

In ordering, it is best to select a length amply long for a person of your height. It is always possible to hold the cane lower down on the stock if it seems longer than necessary. Then, too, it is a simple matter to cut off an inch or so of length, remove the piece cut off from the ferrule and drive the ferrule back onto the shortened stock. If the diameter of the shortened cane end is too large to start into the ferrule, work it down with sand paper. If it fits very tightly, no adhesive will be necessary.

Sensi-Quik will be furnished to exact specified lengths from 36 to and including 54 inches for an extra service fee of twenty-five cents.

If, after you've got your Sensi-Quik, you have a travel problem that you would like an answer to, write me about it. If I don't know the answer, perhaps some other "Go See" will.

Keep this booklet for reference purposes, or hand it to a sightless friend who might be interested. Copies of "The Freedom Story" will be sent without charge to any of your sightless friends. Simply forward their names and addresses either in ink print or Braille.

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ORDER BLANK

My height is \_\_\_\_\_ feet, \_\_\_\_\_ inches.

Please send me by Parcel Post, shipping charges prepaid:

One Standard length Sensi-Quik cane (circle length desired):

40 inch      44 inch      48 inch

One special length Sensi-Quik cane (25 cents extra service charge),

Length desired \_\_\_\_\_ inches long.

Enclosed herewith:

\$5.00 for Standard Length

or      \$5.25 for Special Length

Payment by check, money order or cash is satisfactory. Please make checks or money orders payable to:

Franklin S. Clark, 250 Mulberry St., New York 12, N.Y.

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